

# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

Located just a few miles from cosmopolitan San Francisco, the waters of the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary provide a compelling glimpse of a nationally significant marine environment. Diverse populations of seabirds feed within these waters, as well as important populations of seals and sea lions; whales and dolphins are commonly sighted here, feeding and migrating each year. Large plankton blooms result mainly from the seasonal upwelling of cold, nutrient-rich water off the continental slope. The plankton supports a food chain that includes large stocks of commercial fish and invertebrates, which in turn provide food for seabirds and marine mammals.

This oceanic expanse, encompassing 948 square nautical miles of nearshore and offshore waters of the eastern Pacific, was designated as a national marine sanctuary in 1981. The Gulf of the Farallones constitutes the largest portion of the sanctuary, lying over an exceptionally wide part of the continental shelf that extends almost 30 nautical miles into the Pacific Ocean. The sanctuary also includes protected nearshore habitat surrounding the Farallon Islands and sheltered bays and wetlands along the coastline of Marin and Sonoma counties.



The sanctuary plays an important role in the national system of sanctuaries. Representing the only site yet designated north of Point Conception, California, it contains species and marine habitats characteristic of the eastern Pacific coast from Point Conception north to British Columbia and Alaska. As the only national marine sanctuary adjacent to the mainland, this site includes many coastal access points relatively close to a major urban center, the San Francisco Bay area. In fact, because of its accessibility and proximity to San Francisco Bay, the sanctuary is expected to play a prominent role in representing the National Marine Sanctuary Program on the west coast.

National marine sanctuaries are areas set aside for the careful management of their unique or significant natural and cultural resources and uses. This is accomplished through programs for research and education in the marine environment and improved coordination among regulatory agencies having jurisdiction in these waters. General procedures for selecting, designating, and administering sites are presented in the *National Marine Sanctuary Program Regulations* (15 CFR Part 922). Of paramount importance in these regulations is the preparation of a management plan as a means of ensuring that activities and development planned for the sanctuary comply with the intent of the program. The practical experience of on-site management of national marine sanctuaries can be used to gradually improve the general management of adjacent coastal and marine resources.

The Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary is one of two established sanctuaries in California. The other is the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary in southern California (NOAA, 1983b). This management plan for the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary is designed to inform the general public about activities planned over the next five to ten years. The plan includes general policies and procedures that will help the Marine and Estuarine Management Division and collaborating agencies make informed decisions about the area and its resources. It also describes specific actions for resource protection, research, interpretation, and education within the sanctuary.

The successful implementation of this plan depends on cooperation among the government agencies that regulate resources and uses within the sanctuary. These agencies include the Marine and Estuarine Management Division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Sanctuary Manager and other on-site staff, the National Park Service at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the Point Reyes National Seashore, the California Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Coast Guard, and others. The plan also needs the support of non-government organizations and members of the general public who are interested in and committed to the ocean's well-being.

Variable funding and shifts in priorities for the national program may affect specific aspects of sanctuary management as described in this plan. The scale of programs and the timing for their completion may have to be adjusted according to such unforeseeable factors. Nonetheless, the goals, management objectives, and general policies contained in this plan will continue to guide decisions.

## **MANAGEMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The *Final Environmental Impact Statement* (NOAA, 1980), prepared during the designation process, contained general goals for the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. These have been updated here to reflect the experience gained in managing research and education activities during the years since designation. Three goals provide the foundation for sanctuary management: they relate to resource protection, research, and interpretation and education. The more detailed objectives listed under each goal represent targets against which programs will be evaluated periodically.

### **(A) Resource Protection**

The goal assigned highest priority for management is the improved protection of the marine environment and resources of the sanctuary, consistent with the existing policies of regulatory agencies.

Specific objectives for resource protection are as follows:

- Work toward developing cooperative and integrated programs and policies for the sanctuary and encourage better coordination among all agencies (Federal, state, and local) who participate in the sanctuary's resource management.
- Encourage all agencies to consider appropriate marine resource protection policies when reviewing and evaluating development proposals or permit applications for the sanctuary, and for areas adjacent to it.
- Participate in the development of improved marine resource protection policies, laws, and regulations for the sanctuary.
- Develop a public information program that emphasizes the sensitivity of resources and responsible use; this should enhance visitors' voluntary compliance with regulations.
- Improve such management techniques as contingency planning and emergency response efforts to reduce threats to resources.



## **(B) Research**

Research should help in solving specific management problems, enhance resource protection efforts, and assist in the interpretation of the resources for visitors.

Specific objectives for the research program are as follows:

- Assess the sanctuary's information base to identify gaps in knowledge that can affect our ability to manage the area.
- Conduct studies of species or marine communities to identify resources most in need of management attention.
- Promote the sanctuary as a site for management-related marine research by providing financial and logistical support for scientific investigations that address critical marine resource protection issues.
- Design research projects that are responsive to management concerns and that contribute to improved management of the sanctuary.
- Make effective use of research results by incorporating them into interpretive and resource protection programs.
- Encourage information exchange and cooperation among all the organizations and agencies undertaking management-related research in the sanctuary to promote more informed management.

## **(C) Interpretation and Education**

The interpretation and education programs are designed to enhance public awareness and understanding of the sanctuary, and to promote the need for and benefits of long-term comprehensive management of its marine resources. Programs will be of professional-level quality and designed to elicit a favorable response from the public. Program goals are to increase appreciation and support for marine resource protection in general, and for the sanctuary in particular.

Aims of the interpretive programs are as follows:

- Provide the public with accurate information about the sanctuary, about current marine resource protection issues and activities, and about the National Marine Sanctuary system.
- Use the sanctuary to illustrate to the public the broader marine issues, concerns, and management policies that are currently being addressed in marine protected areas around the world.
- Offer the public opportunities for first-hand appreciation of the sanctuary by improving access to appropriate areas within the sanctuary and by other means that are compatible with resource protection objectives.

- Assess current levels of use and monitor human impact over time to determine visitor carrying capacity in vulnerable areas and to minimize potential use conflicts.
- Broaden public support for the sanctuary by offering programs suited to visitors of diverse interests, ages, and background.
- Collaborate with local organizations to provide interpretive services complementary to the sanctuary program and to develop a strong network of support in the local community.
- Stimulate public involvement by establishing volunteer programs, by having sanctuary staff participate in school and community outreach programs, and by encouraging the public to express their opinion of the program's effectiveness and usefulness.

The goals and objectives presented above are the foundation of this management plan for the sanctuary. They also support the national program's mission, for progress in each sanctuary translates into progress for the national program.

Since the national program is relatively new, ongoing review of its management approaches and policies is essential. It is only with regular evaluation that the Marine and Estuarine Management Division will be able to confirm that it has established meaningful guidelines. Since this is one of only a few programs in the world building a capability for resource management in marine protected areas, experience gained at this large cold-water site can make significant contributions to marine protection internationally.



# Two

Gulf of the Farallones  
National Marine Sanctuary

**THE SANCTUARY  
ENVIRONMENT**